DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 103 573 CE 003 084

AUTHOR Schwager, Herbert A.; Conrad, Rowan W.
TITLE Impact of Group Counseling on Self and Other Acceptance and Persistence with Rural Disadvantaged Student Families. Counseling Services Report No. 15.
INSTITUTION Mountain-Plains Education and Economic Development Program, Inc., Glasgow AFB, Mont.
REPORT NO IR-4-IV-032
PUB DATE Jun 74
NOTE 17p.; For other documents describing aspects of the Mountain-Plains Program, see CE 003 082-091

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Disadvantaged Groups; Group Counseling; *Peer Acceptance; *Self Concept Tests; *Self Esteem; Test Results
IDENTIFIERS Berger Self Acceptance Scale; BSAS; MCCP; Minnesota Couples Communication Program; Mountain Plains Program

ABSTRACT

The current study examined the effectiveness of a theme-centered developmental group model focusing on communications and on the differential effects of two group settings for counseling delivery. The subjects were 32 young, disadvantaged adults, consisting of 15 married couples and two divorced females, who were randomly assigned to spouse together and spouse apart treatment options focusing on the Minnesota Couples Communication Program (MCCP). The success criteria were improved self and other acceptance as measured by the Berger Self Acceptance Scale. Both settings showed significant improvement on each acceptance variable with no significant difference observed between treatment settings, leading to the conclusion that the MCCP is an effective vehicle for improving self and other acceptance in the population in both spouse together and spouse apart treatment settings. (Author/SA)

ED103573

Mountain-Plains Education & Economic Development Program, Inc.

POST OFFICE BOX 3078 · GLASGOW, MONTANA 59231 · TEL: (406) 524-6221

Impact of Group Counseling on Self and Other Acceptance and Persistence with Rural Disadvantaged Student Families

Counseling Services Report No. 15
(IR-4-IV-032)
June, 1974

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

A Study By:
Herbert A. Schwager
and
Rowan W. Conrad

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
T. R. Flores
Mt-Plains Ed&EcDevPr
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

Abstract

Seventeen rural disadvantaged families in the Mountain-Plains Career Education Program were randomly assigned to spouse together and spouse apart group treatment options and experienced sixteen (16) ninety (90) minute treatment sessions focusing upon the Minnesota Couples Communication Program (MCCP). The "success" criteria were improved self and other acceptance as measured by the Berger Self Acceptance Scale. Both settings showed significant improvement on each acceptance variable with no significant difference observed between treatment settings leading the authors to conclude that the MCCP is an effective vehicle for improving self and other acceptance in the population in both spouse together and spouse apart treatment settings.

This Study is a Joint Effort of:

The Support and Field Services Division
Dr. T. R. Flores
Program Deputy Director

The Research Services Division
David A. Coyle, Director

Product in Development (Not Published Material)

PRODUCT IN DEVELOPMENT (NOT PUBLISHED MATERIAL) Mountain-Plains retains sole control of these materials and unauthorized use or reproduction, by mechanical or other means, is not permitted.

CE003084

The Problem

The Mountain-Plains Career Education Program for rural disadvantaged families has documented trait ratings suggesting inappropriately resolved developmental stage crises as characteristic of the student population (Conrad, 1974). Personal and Family Counseling objectives for the program focus upon appropriate resolution of these crises as an organizing principle; particularly, focusing upon identity and intimacy stages as elaborated by Erickson (1963). Heavy use is made of group settings as counseling delivery systems; although merits of group approaches are under constant examination and question and skepticism is voiced in reference to the effectiveness of certain group types as counseling delivery systems (e.g., Lieberman, et.al., 1973; Solomon, et.al., 1972). Some major issues were discussed by Conrad (1973) with the implied conclusion that it was the skill and intention of the perpetrator that made for successful (versus unsuccessful) use of groups for counseling delivery.

The current study examines the effectiveness of a theme centered developmental group model focusing on communications with particular focus on the Minnesota Couples Communication Program (MCCP) (Miller, et.al., 1972 abc) in improving self acceptance - a specific counseling program objective -and on improving acceptance of others - the other half of the coin "acceptance." It would seem from Achert's (1959) and Berger's (1952) work, that self acceptance could be an appropriate indicator of

identity formation (an overall counseling program goal) as well. Attainment of these objectives is also expected to result in a higher program completion rate.

The study also examines the differential effects of two group settings for counseling delivery, spouse together and spouse apart, and treatment order effects for groups within each setting.

It is expected that both settings will be strong delivery systems. This seems to be supported by Coohery's (1973) findings which are interpreted as indicating group counseling to be the most appropriate delivery system for marital counseling when the outcome (divorce versus reconciliation) is not clear at the time counseling is initiated. Development of self acceptance was not expected to differ between settings whereas acceptance of others was expected to be more strongly impacted in the spouse together setting.

Procedures

Subjects:

Subjects were 32 young (mean age 27), disadvantaged adults of average aptitude (mean GATB G score of 96) consisting of 15 married couples and two divorced females with dependent children. All subjects were students in the Mountain-Plains open-entry/open-exit Family Career Education Program (National Institute of Education Career Education Model IV). Subjects were assigned psuedo random fashion into spouse-apart (X_1) and spouse-together (X_2) group treatment options. Assignment into treatment groups was by program entry group. Theoretically (Lindquist, 1953), this will be random. Practically, this may not be totally true if human fallability introduces non-random fluctuations into the recruitment and selection process. Subjects were treated in four separate groups all conducted by the same counselor during the Fall of 1973.

During program orientation the basic research nature of Mountain-Plains is explained to all students. Subjects were reminded that the groups were part of a research study, assured that only mean test scores would be reported, and that all identifying data would be maintained in strict confidence. The counselor assured group members that the focus of the effort was a meaningful and productive developmental experience for them with the research efforts added so that effects could be assessed quantitatively.

Demographic and aptitude data was obtained from student files.

Design:

Overall effect is examined in a one group pre test-post test design. The simple analysis of variance was selected for statistical testing of significance of treatment effect. However, the differences were so large that inspection was deemed sufficient proof of significance and no statistical calculations were performed

A two-dimensional design was used comparing the treatment settings spouse-apart (X_1) and spouse-together (X_2) with the treatment groups blocked according to order of meeting within setting. The A group met first with the B group meeting later in the week.in each setting. Pre-test and post-test scores were examined separately for each variable using the two-dimensional analysis of variance (unweighted means). Pre-test comparisons were deemed necessary due to the mechanical nature of random sampling into treatments.

Instrument:

The Berger Self-Acceptance Scale (Berger, 1952) was chosen as the instrument for this study because it is relatively short and measures a specific counseling program objective (self acceptance) which is indicated to relate strongly to a general counseling program goal (identity). The scale has been very favorably reviewed (Shaw and Wright, 1967) in terms of construction, construct validity, and reliability (Spearman-Brown split halves reliabilities of 0.89 and 0.78 for self and other acceptance scales respectively). The instrument scales are:

Scale 1, Acceptance of Self. A high score is indicative of a person who accepts his own self-worth.

Scale 2, Acceptance of Others. A high score is indicative of a person who accepts the worth of others.

Treatment:

All groups experience sixteen (16) ninety (90) minute sessions lead by a professional counselor certified in the use of the Minnesota Couples Communication Program (MCCP). The first three (3) sessions were devoted to pre-testing and traditional get-acquainted exercises (e.g., dyadic introductions). The fourth session centered on a discussion of the theme "communication" with all members of each of the four groups agreeing to spend remaining sessions on the Basic Interpersonal Relations Program (BIRP) (Human Relations Institute, 1969) and the Minnesota Couples Communication Program (MCCP) (Miller, et.al., 1972 abc). The next four (4) sessions focused on BIRP and the final eight (8) on MCCP. A more detailed report of the treatment is available in a report by Schwager and Conrad (1974).

Results:

Pre-test comparisons showed no significant differences or interactions for either variable by setting or order. There was a significant increase in the Self-Acceptance and Acceptance of Others scores for both treatment settings and for all groups. As gains are approximately one and a

half standard deviations in all cases, statistical analysis was deemed unnecessary.

There was no significant post-test score difference between treatment settings, or by treatment order on self acceptance and no significant setting-by-order interaction (Tables 1 and 2).

The post-test scores on acceptance of others show a significant interaction of treatment setting-by-order.

No significant difference is observed between treatment settings on either acceptance variable.

Only one (1) family of the seventeen (17) included in the study has been unsuccessful in negotiating the program as opposed to an overall non-completion rate of one (1) family in five (5).

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

Insert Table 3 about here

Insert Table 4 about here

Discussion:

The finding of insignificant differences between pre-tests reduces practical concern regarding the sampling procedure and allows greater confidence in interpreting results as regards sampling. However, the sample size and unequal numbers of subjects within treatments argues for cautious interpretation.

As treatment effects between settings were not significantly different, subjects within settings were pooled and sex effects examined for each variable with a finding of no difference. Findings thus apply equally to male and female subjects.

The expected superiority of the X_2 treatment on impacting Acceptance of Others was not found. However, a significant setting-by-order interaction was found. It would appear from the data (Table 3) that counseling tended to be most effectively applied as regards acceptance of others the second time it was used in the spouse apart setting; whereas the trend was toward most effective first use with spouses together. Perhaps the fact that the theme in use was designed for couples and was adapted for the spouse apart situation can account for the A-B score trend within X_1 contributing to the interaction.

The only systematic (as opposed to chance-factor) interpretation for the A-B trend in scores within X_2 seems to be counselor exhaustion. The B X_2 group has the lowest scores and is a 1:00 o'clock group following a

10:30 to 12:00 morning group. The fact that the self-acceptance scores did not also interact might be considered as further evidence that self-acceptance and acceptance of others, although correlated (Berger, 1952), are indeed different aspects of acceptance. However, it could as likely indicate greater sensitivity for the items on the acceptance of others scale for the particular treatment and population, and influences of the sampling method cannot be totally discounted.

The variable "morning vs afternoon treatment application" was not controlled as a year's experience in group programming with the population studied had not given any reason to regard this as an influencing variable and it would have been administratively inconvenient to do so. Unequal N's between treatment options might have strengthened effects in the X_1 setting due to nearly a third more counselor attention and practice/discussion time being available to each student in X_1. A decrease of one third (1/3) in the X_1 pre-post gain score would cause effects to be more favorable in the X_2 group. However, there is no way to know if this (or any other) correction factor is accurate. Even a correction of 1/3 in gain would leave gains in the X_1 setting at about one standard deviation indicating strong effect for MCCP in a spouse apart setting - at least in the situation when both spouses concurrently experience the program.

Because students were also engaging in other program activities during the period of the study, the multiple treatment effect is not controlled. However, as no other aspects of their Mountain-Plains program involve-

ment over the treatment period had increasing self or other acceptance as objectives, attributing gains to the treatment is logically defensible.

Finally, it is the subjective conclusion of the counselor administering treatment that the BIRP was not a significant factor in treatment and that only the introductory exercises, communications discussion, and MCCP sessions are required for effective treatment. If this assumption is valid, this would mean that treatment could be condensed to ten (10) to twelve (12) ninety (90) minute sessions (excluding testing) with no loss in effect.

Conclusions:

The small and unequal N's indicate caution in interpretation. Additionally, the attribution of effect to the MCCP program is strictly subjective. Observed effect may be centered in the BIRP or in the full combination of treatments and exercises. With these cautions in mind it is concluded that overall results do indicate MCCP to be effective in both spouse together and spouse apart group settings in increasing self acceptance and acceptance of others. However, it must be pointed out that in spite of the dramatic increases, students' self acceptance scores are still on the order of a standard deviation below the subjects sampled by Berger (1952). A follow-up study is planned to ascertain whether, over time, gains tend to: increase, hold constant, or be lost.

References Cited

Ackert, R. U., "Interrelationship Among Various Dimensions of Self Concept." In G. Lindzey and C. Hall (eds.) Theories of Personality: Primary Sources and Research. New York, Wiley, 1965, pp 491-93.

Berger, E., "The Relation Between Expressed Acceptance of Self and Expressed Acceptance of Others." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 47 (1952), 778-82. (Reported in Shaw and Wright).

Conrad, R. W., "Comprehensive Overview of the Mountain-Plains Counseling Program." Counseling Services Report #10 (IR-4-IV-006). Washington: National Institute of Education and/or Glasgow AFB, MT: Mountain-Plains, December, 1973.

Conrad, R. W., "Personality Development and Employability in a Rural Disadvantaged Population." Counseling Services Report #11 (IR-4-IV-008). Washington: National Institute of Education and/or Glasgow AFB, MT: Mountain-Plains, January, 1974.

Cooherly, J. R., "The Outcomes of Six Major Forms of Marriage Counseling Compared: A Pilot Study." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 35 (November, 1973), 608-10.

Erickson, E. H., Childhood and Society. New York, W. W. Norton, 1963.

Basic Interpersonal Relations, Chicago: Human Development Institute, 1969.

Leiberman, M.A., I.D. Yalom, and M. B. Miles, Encounter Groups: First Facts. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Lindquist, E. F., Design and Analysis of Experiments in Psychology and Education. Boston: Houghton Mifflen, 1953.

Miller, S., E. W. Nunnally, and D. B. Wackman, The Minnesota Couples Communication Program: Instructors Manual. Minneapolis (2001 Riverside Ave.): Minnesota Couples Communication Program, 1972.

Miller, S., E. W. Nunnally, and D. B. Wackman, The Minnesota Couples Communication Program: Couples Handbook. Minneapolis (2001 Riverside Ave.): Minnesota Couples Communication Program, 1972.

Miller, S., E. W. Nunnally, and D. B. Wackman, The Minnesota Couples Communication Program: Revised Agenda. Minneapolis (2001 Riverside Ave.): Minnesota Couples Communication Program, 1972.

Schwager, H. A. and R. W. Conrad, "Impact of Group Counseling on Self and Other Acceptance and Persistence with Rural Disadvantaged Families." Counseling Services Report #15. Washington: National Institute of Education and/or Glasgow AFB, MT: Mountain-Plains, June, 1974.

Shaw, M.E. and J. M. Wright, Scales for the Measurement of Attitudes. New York: McGraw Hill, 1967.

Soloman, L. N. and B. Berzon (eds.), New Perspectives on Encounter Groups. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1972.

TABLE 1

Self Acceptance Scores

			Order					
			A			B		
			Pre	Post	N	Pre	Post	N
Setting	X_1	M	75.5	102.3		67.0	102.5	
		SD	9.69	17.0	6	18.2	9.20	6
	X_2	M	60.7	94.6		59.3	93.5	
		SD	15.3	13.5	10	16.2	18.3	10

TABLE 2

Analysis of Variance: Post-test Scores, Self Acceptance

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Setting	523	1	523	2.26
Order	1.87	1	1.87	0.01
Interaction	2.93	1	2.93	0.01
Within Cells	6515	28	233	

TABLE 3

Acceptance of Others Scores

			Order					
			A			B		
			Pre	Post	N	Pre	Post	N
Setting	X_1	M	58.0	77.0		55.0	83.5	
		SD	9.30	8.69	6	7.38	6.77	6
	X_2	M	55.4	90.6		49.3	75.9	
		SD	12.4	9.48	10	2.67	10.0	10

TABLE 4

Analysis of Variance: Post-test Scores, Acceptance of Others

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Setting	67.5	1	67.5	0.81
Order	126.4	1	126.4	1.52
Interaction	842	1	842	10.2*
Error	2323	28	83.0	

*Significant difference, $p \leq 0.05$